

Financial Assistance for Needy Families

What is the service?

- Washington State provides financial assistance for needy families primarily through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program and the State Family Assistance Program (SFA) administered by the Department of Social and Health Services Economic Services Administration.
- TANF, formerly AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), is a federal welfare program providing a temporary monthly grant and medical assistance to eligible children under age 18 and their needy caretaker relatives.
- SFA was established by the Washington State Legislature to provide financial assistance to families who would no longer be eligible for TANF due to federal Welfare Reform legislation. This program mirrors TANF. The TANF eligibility requirements for immigrants do not apply to this program. All other TANF rules apply.
- Other assistance programs administered by the Economic Services Administration include the Diversion Cash Assistance Program for families with a short term need, Refugee Cash Assistance for refugees or asylees who have resided in the US for 8 months or less, and the Additional Requirements-Emergent Needs program for TANF and Refugee Cash Assistance grant families experiencing housing and utility emergencies. The Economic Services Administration description of all assistance programs is available at: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/2004briefingbook.htm>
- Most TANF/SFA families are required to participate in the *WorkFirst* Program which emphasizes gaining work-based skills to become self-sufficient. It was implemented in 1997 and combines state and federal funding for services.
- Four *WorkFirst* partners and state agencies provide services in collaboration with many business and community organizations. They include: Department of Social and Health Services (DHHS), the Employment Security Department (ESD), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED).¹

The services they provide include:

DSHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First and ongoing contact ▪ Determines eligibility ▪ Provides orientation and determines case manager assignment ▪ Provides monthly cash assistance 	ESD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides job placement ▪ Provides job search workshops and fairs 	SBCTC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides job skill and advancement training through 34 colleges/technical schools around state 	CTED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotes business, planning, and partnering within community ▪ Provides Community Jobs program
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- *WorkFirst* Services include:¹
 - Vocational counseling, training and skill development

- Job placement
- Parenting classes and help paying for childcare
- Nutrition and health care
- Work clothes or uniforms
- Assistance seeking, preparing for, and adjusting to promotions
- *WorkFirst* Website: <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov>

How is the service provided?

- For monthly cash assistance, families complete a single application online or in person at one of 57 Community Service offices (CSO) across the state.
- CSO staff also link families with programs at federal, state, and local levels, including: child support, food stamps, tuition assistance, medical assistance, working child care connections, etc.¹
- Most TANF families are required to participate in the *WorkFirst* program.

Eligibility

- Washington State residents who are pregnant or responsible for the care of children who meet income and resource requirements and citizenship requirements are eligible.
- Income and resource requirements are defined by federal and state laws and income limits vary by the size of family.²
- Most families are limited to 60 months of cash assistance in their lifetime.
- Federal government allows 20% of state caseload to be exempt from 60 month lifetime limit if there are: extenuating circumstances, full-time participation, or Child Safety Net sanction in place.¹
- Eligibility is reviewed at least every 6 months, and continues until the client becomes ineligible.
- Families moving from other states to Washington receive the same benefits as Washington State residents.
- The Eligibility A-Z Manual provides administrative rules and procedures for staff to determine eligibility for people applying for cash, food and medical assistance in Washington State at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/eazmanual/>.

Who is receiving the service?

Income Assistance (AFDC/TANF) Average Monthly Caseload³

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Caseload	95,334	85,524	67,256	58,796	54,579	55,068	54,654	55,607

¹ Washington Workfirst, "Washington State's Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) State Plan (Biennial Review December 23, 2002". Website: <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/about/planbody.pdf> . Accessed 5/10/05

² Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, "Eligibility A-Z Manual, Cash Assistance". Website: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/eazmanual/Sections/Std4Cash.htm>. Accessed 6/2/05

³ Washington State Office of Financial Management. "Washington Trends: Income Assistance (AFDC/TANF) Average Monthly Caseload ". Website: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/trends/htm/fig404.asp> Accessed 8/19/05

- Once 60 month limit is reached, reevaluation of need takes place, and benefits are extended if needed.
- As of June 2004, approximately 6% of average caseload was receiving extended benefits past the 60 month limit, which is far from the 20% level allowed federally.⁴
- Since 1997 *WorkFirst* reform, welfare levels have dropped by approximately 40% from 97,000 in 1997 to 58,000 in April 2005.

Average Monthly Assistance Amount and Members Receiving TANF/GA/SSI⁵ (in 2003)

Description	
Percent of Washington households with member receiving TANF assistance	5.1% (N=122,143)
Median Monthly Cash Assistance	\$406

- Median *WorkFirst* wage for single parent with two children (as of February 2005) was \$8.50 per hour. This figure does not incorporate child support services that go directly to the parents, irrespective of whether the parent is receiving cash assistance.⁶

Issues/concerns

- Washington's *WorkFirst* program is described as "innovative assistance plan", with a dramatic decrease in welfare recipients since 1997.⁵
- As of Spring 2005, new measurement methods are being tested in an effort to improve federal participation rates.⁷
- The Internal Revenue Service wants taxpayers to be aware of additional tax refund options through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Up to \$4,300 per family is available to families with children earning below \$34,458 per year.⁸
- DSHS is working to improve monitoring and documenting of TANF services.⁹
- Washington State has historically provided TANF benefits for Washington tribes. In 2002, Port Gamble S'Klallam assumed responsibility for TANF assistance for tribe members. Other tribes are also assuming TANF responsibilities.^{10,11}

⁴ Economic Services Administration, Department of Social and Health Services, "ESA Briefing Book for State Fiscal Year 2004". Website: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ESA/2004briefingbook.htm>. Accessed 8/19/05.

⁵ 2004 Washington State Population Survey; Office of Financial Management (OFM), Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services. Website: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/sps/2004/tabulations.asp>. Accessed 5/10/05

⁶ Washington *WorkFirst*, "2005 Monthly Earnings and Benefits for Single Parent with 2 children". Website: <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/about/workpays.htm>. Posted 2/05

⁷ Washington *WorkFirst*, State Staff Briefings 2005, "Actual Hours Release Dates Announced". Website: <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/statestaff/briefings.htm>. Accessed 5/26/05

⁸ Washington *WorkFirst*, Press Releases, "Don't Overlook Earned Income Tax Credit, Amended Returns Can Bring Big Payments". Website: <http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/eitc/eitcpressrelease0305.htm>. Posted 3/25/05.

⁹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, "DSHS Working to Comply with Newly Issued Audit Findings but Says Some Exceed Legal Requirements of Funding", Website: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mediareleases/2005/pr05019.shtml>. Posted 3/8/05

¹⁰ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, "Port Gamble S'Klallam Becomes First Washington Tribe to offer its own TANF and Child Support Programs", Website: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mediareleases/2002/pr02227.shtml>. Posted 7/02. Re-posted 5/7/05

¹¹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, "Three South Sound Tribes Reach Agreement to Provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families". Website: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mediareleases/2004/pr04241.shtml>. Posted 9/04; Re-posted 5/7/05